

Remo Pre-Tuned Percussion

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

Remo has been known to bring out some pretty innovative products: *RotoTom*, *FiberSkyn* heads, etc. And now, Remo is daring to change the way that drums have been made. Since the age of the dinosaur, drums have been made by stretching a skin over a hollow cylinder. Remo has found the technology to *shrink* drumhead film, rather than stretch it—developing Pre-Tuned drumheads, drumsets, and educational percussion instruments.

HEADS

PTS ("Pre-Tuned System") drumheads are available, for now, in three tonal variations: Bright (high pitch), Mellow (medium pitch), and Dark (low pitch). Imagine two Remo metal hoops with coated *Ambassador* weight Mylar in between. The top retaining hoop also serves as the counterhoop; eliminating the need for separate hoops. The PTS drums themselves need no lugs or rods, either. PTS heads can be used on conventionally-tuned drums by way of special "S"-shaped claw-hook adaptors. The hooks have holes for tension rods, and clamp to the top hoop of the head. If desired, the head can be fine-tuned up to other pitches after the initial finger pressure on the rods that will secure the head. On a 10-lug drum, you don't even have to use all ten rods; half of them work just fine to secure the PTS head to the shell.

I tested all three PTS heads on various drums. The top hoop holds up amazingly well to hard rim shots, but the rods seem to back off a bit more than usual from hard playing. Durability is the same as a regular coated *Ambassador* head. Being in tune with themselves, all the heads produced clear sound and even response. I especially liked the Dark head for a deeper, flatter sound.

The use of PTS heads could certainly facilitate drumhead changing and tuning—especially if in a hurry! In fact, if need be, the drum *could* be played by just *laying* the head atop the shell and then tightening it down when you get the chance. The heads produce definite pitch and could be played by themselves as tuned tom-toms, with the proper style mount—not even *needing* a shell! There are only three variations of pitch currently available, but fine-tuning will give a slightly larger range. PTS heads

are available in 12", 13", 14", 16" Batter, 22" Bass Drum (all coated *Ambassador*), and 14" Snare Side. Prices start at \$12.50. I do hope they decide to produce PTS heads in their other varieties (CS, *Pinstripe*, etc.).

DRUMSETS

Remo is also making complete Pre-Tuned Drum Kits in three, four, and five-piece configurations. The drums have *Acousticon* shells, which are made on high-density, resin-coated tubing, similar to a phenolic shell, and lighter than wood shells. Retaining clips hold the heads onto the shells—they have no lugs or rods. (Here, the fine-tuning capability is not available.) The 5-piece kit retails at \$390 with hardware.



Drum sizes are: 14x22 bass drum, 8x12 and 9x13 tom-toms, 14x16 floor tom (with legs), and 5x14 snare drum. The toms are fitted with *Mellow* heads top and bottom. The snare drum has a *Bright* batter, and a special weight snare-side head which has a slot cut into both sides of its rim to allow the snare connecting strips to pass through. For pedal mounting, the bass drum head rims are widened to the size of a regular bass hoop. A felt strip is fitted under the batter head. White plastic tape is included to inlay all rims the same color as the drums.

Hardware includes a three-tier cymbal stand, tri-arm snare stand, hi-hat stand, (all with tripod bases), a double-spring pedal and a tom-tom holder mounted on the bass drum, using separate hex arms with a swivel angle adjustment.

All the drums sound remarkably good—and, of course, all are in perfect tune. The retaining clips holding the heads in place can enable a change to a full concert tom set with single-headed bass drum in seconds! Affordable for students and the

budget-minded, yet with enough quality and sound to be used as a home practice kit for pros, the PTS kits seem to be an ideal thing—a complete set of drums at a price we haven't seen in a long time.

EDUCATIONAL PERCUSSION

The PTS concept branches out into educational percussion as well. A 4x14 snare is available at only \$39, having PTS heads recessed into an *Acousticon* shell. An internal knob-operated brush serves as the snare unit.

Pre-Tuned bongos in six and seven-inch diameters have either replaceable or non-replaceable *Fiberskyn* 2 heads, as do PTS tambourines. There is also a range of Orff/Schulwerk instruments. The replaceable



models need only a flat tool to change their heads.

Remo also promises a 3-piece junior drumset for the Christmas season with a 16" bass drum, 12" snare, 10" tom, pedal, snare stand, and cymbal mount for less than \$100!

Remo says that this is only the first step in PTS technology. The Pre-Tuned products are ideal for bringing percussion to students at affordable prices. At the same time, professional drumset players and percussionists should realize the value of the PTS heads—even used as solo percussion instruments. We've all heard, at one time or another, that a certain product will revolutionize the whole drum world. Remo's Pre-Tuned products seem to be on the way to doing just that.

MD Readers may write to Bob Saydlowski at: 183 Francis Ave., Pittsfield, MA 01201. Enclose a S.A.S.E. for a reply.

